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THE BODY OF CHRIST:
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY IN PAULINE THEOLOGY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
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This dissertation, written by

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PREFACE

"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then may men call upon [one] in whom they have not believed? And how may they believe [in one] of whom they have not heard? And how may they hear without one proclaiming?" (Rom. 10:13 f.)

If the New Testament is to have any relevance for the Christian today, it must be heard and understood. Thus one of the major tasks facing the contemporary parish minister, having been addressed by the Word of God and having heard it, is the hermeneutical task of translating what he has heard into the vernacular of his congregation. As Robert Funk has asserted, if the minister is not such a hermeneut, he has missed his vocation.¹

The task of the hermeneut, simply stated, is to translate (in the most radical sense of that term, *i.e.*, "to carry across") the Word of God in the text to the understanding of the hearer.² But the process is more difficult than it might seem on the surface, for the old concept of exegeting a passage for a sermon, in the sense of interpreting the text, or in the sense of "walking in the shoes of Paul," does not accomplish this transfer. Historical criticism has taught us, as Funk tells us, that

¹Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 14.

²*Cf.* James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), II, 1-77.

the biblical text, like any other text, is composed of human language and is therefore culturally conditioned.³

The conclusion led to by this recognition that the New Testament is only a relative statement of the Word of God, did not really make its impact until Barth's commentary on Romans confronted the world with it. As Funk summarizes Barth's thesis,

If the text is a human word and therefore historically conditioned, it is not the text that is the word of God, but the text itself is already the *interpretation* of the word of God.⁴

Barth's methodology was this: he lived with the text until it disappeared and the Word of God itself confronted him. But then this Word of God cannot be transmitted as an object of knowledge; it must speak through the text, and through its translation or interpretation to the man in the pew. In order for the preacher to assist this process of letting God's Word be heard and understood, and even more, for him to avoid becoming an interference within that process, it is essential that he be familiar with (1) the world view of the particular New Testament author from whose writing he is preaching, (2) the language with which that New Testament author expresses himself, (3) the world view of the man in the pew today, and (4) the language which he best understands.

Bultmann saw that this language event, this proclamation, is personal address--is paradoxically on the one hand the authoritative address of the word of God to man, while on the other hand it is

³Funk, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴*Ibid.*

spoken by the preacher, a man. He observed that

What marks his sermon as proclamation is that it has as its text a word of Scripture and consists in the interpretation of that word.⁵

The content of the sermon is the *kerygma*, the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that fact makes the primary difference. As Bultmann has aptly put it,

There is something 'communicated' in a genuine sermon, namely, an event, the event of the revelation of God's grace that has occurred in Jesus Christ. The remarkable thing, however, is that one must really say not the revelation which *has occurred*, but the revelation which *is occurring*. For this communication does not make known a past historical fact; rather, the paradox is that, in this 'communication,' the occurrence of revelation takes place anew, in that a historical event is proclaimed as the eschatological event.⁶

This study will show that, for Paul, the very concept "body of Christ" is itself a proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord. In fact, this concept does not once occur in Paul without proclaiming the grace of God through the gift of Christ on the cross for man's salvation.

It is my hope that this study will make a contribution to the life of the contemporary church and its ministry: an understanding of what Paul meant by the term *σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, and how he gave expression to that understanding. If this study succeeds in arming the reader with a working familiarity with this central concept in Pauline theology, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

⁵Rudolf Bultmann, "General Truths and Christian Proclamation," *Journal for Theology and the Church*, IV (1967), 153 f.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 154.

I wish to express grateful appreciation for the guidance and assistance of my advisory committee, particularly to Professor Betz, whose excellence in the area of New Testament studies and excitement about his field inspired me to attempt this study in Pauline theology. I owe a great debt of gratitude also to Professor Coogan, who spent many late hours assisting me with the endless revisions and editorial tasks that accompany a student's first attempt at writing a major study of this nature.

I dedicate this work to my wife Mary, whose constant encouragement, support, and understanding through these four years has made possible this dissertation and all that it represents.

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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

If the whole of Pauline theology can be summarized by a single phrase--one central Christological, ecclesiological, soteriological, ethical, theological term--that term is *σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, "body of Christ." But exactly what Paul meant when he used that term has been a subject for debate for many years.

I. THE PURPOSE

Statement of the problem. Many exegetes and many more expositors have written volumes of interpretation on the concept of the "body of Christ." Their efforts, however, have varied widely in content and quality. Their presuppositions likewise display a broad diversity; and those professing the use of the same methodology conclude with contrasting views of just what the "body of Christ" is for Paul. As a result of this ambiguity, the term has become a nearly meaningless platitude. Its meaning has deteriorated to the point that it is used in reference to everything from the communion wafer to the church building itself. It is the purpose of this study to outline an understanding of "body of Christ" as Paul used it that is neither too complex for the average minister or seminary student to grasp, nor so sketchy that he will be likely to use or refer to it inappropriately.

Importance of this study. Even the most brief survey of the material available on the "body of Christ" will show that it falls into two categories: (1) The highly technical, extremely complex exegetical studies, the majority of which are not available in English; and (2) the over-simplified, homiletically-oriented books and articles, in which Paul's concept of the body of Christ is indistinguishably confused with that of the pseudo-Pauline writers, interpreters across the centuries, and the author of the particular book or article himself. The need is obvious for a study which directs its attention specifically to the meaning which this concept had for Paul, as that knowledge can be obtained from his own letters, and which attempts to communicate its findings in a meaningful way to seminary students and ministers.

This study, then, is not intended as the "final words" on a much-debated subject, nor is it intended to be a correction of all mistaken views to date; rather it is meant to place before the reader in as clear and straightforward manner as possible, the findings and conclusions of an exegete who is concerned with the far-reaching implications of this term for both Paul's day and ours, but whose avowed intent is to avoid reading back into Paul's text conclusions previously arrived at, or influenced by later usage of the term.

II. METHODOLOGY

It will be the methodology in this study (1) to examine the Pauline texts dealing with σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in exegetical manner;

(2) to make some theological and ecclesiological determinations concerning Paul's use and understanding of this term; (3) to investigate the implications of his understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ for the existing social order of his day; and (4) to suggest possible implications of Paul's concept of the body of Christ for our contemporary church.

Translations. In order to avoid inconsistencies between how I am understanding a particular passage and how the reader, based on some standard translation, is understanding it, I will begin each of the exegetical chapters with my translation from the Greek text.¹

Exegesis. The exegesis of each of these passages will include the use of all of the modern critical tools available and relevant to that particular passage, including form criticism, comparative religions concepts, and literary criticism.

Presuppositions. It lies outside the realm of this study to justify my presuppositions, but it is necessary to announce them at this point to avoid seeming to be academically presumptuous or unscholarly. (1) I recognize as Pauline, and within this study will deal only with, only the undisputed letters of Paul: Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, and Philemon. Although the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians contain many

¹The basis for these translations will be *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Erwin Nestle (ed.) (Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt, 25th edition, 1963).

references to the "body of Christ," they represent a later development in the growth of this concept, and should enter into the discussion only insofar as they demonstrate how Paul's concept of the body of Christ was understood by those immediately following him.

(2) I am convinced by my study of the Pauline texts² and by the evidence presented by those theologians whose works I have consulted³ that one tenet in Paul's Christology, as well as in the Christology of at least a part of the tradition before him--*i.e.* that which he quotes and with which he agrees, *e.g.*, the hymn quoted in Philippians 2:5-11--is the pre-existence of Christ. How this concept came to be a part of early Christian theology cannot be said with certainty, but I am convinced that the influence of the Gnostic Redeemer myth⁴ upon this belief is undeniable.⁵

²I Cor. 2:7; II Cor. 8:9; Rom. 8:3,32; Gal. 4:4; *cf.* Col. 1:15-20; I Tim. 3:16.

³This view is in accord with Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: World, 1956), pp. 190 f.; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 292 ff.; Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (Naperville: Allenson, 1966), pp. 111-123; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 247-314; Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 93-97; *et alii*.

⁴For a brief sketch of the Gnostic Redeemer myth, see the Appendix.

⁵This is in accord with Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, pp. 190 f.; Fuller, *op. cit.*; and Hans Dieter Betz, seminar on Problems in New Testament Christology, Sept. 26, 1967; and in disagreement with Kramer, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

CHAPTER II

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 7:4

I. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

Romans 7:1-6. (1) Or do you not know, brothers--for I speak to those who know [the] law--that the law rules over the man for as long as he lives? (2) For the married woman has been bound by law to the living husband; but if the husband dies, she has been released from the law of the husband. (3) Therefore, while the husband lives, if she belongs to another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, and, having belonged to a different man, she is not an adulteress. (4) So also you, my brothers, were put to death to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might belong to a different one, [namely] the one who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit to God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins operated in our members through the law to bear fruit for death; (6) but now we have been released from the law, having died [to that] by which we were held captive, so that we might serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.

II. EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT

In any given text, the exegete must begin afresh with the question: "What does Paul mean by the 'body of Christ' in this particular passage?" Does he mean, for example, the physical body of

Christ on the cross? Does he mean the Christian community? Does he in some way mean both? The search for an answer to this question then leads him to a critical examination of other passages which are related to the text under investigation either form-critically or contextually.

The general context: Romans Seven. For a proper understanding of the meaning of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ in this verse, it is necessary to see the context within which it is to be found, and to see how it functions within this context. In verse one, Paul, speaking to persons who know the law, reminds them of something they already know: The law has command over the man (only) as long as he lives. But death on the part of either party invalidates or ends a legal relationship--as he illustrates with the example of the death of a marriage partner (verses two and three). Then following verse four, Paul reflects in the remainder of this chapter how things had been "while we were in the flesh," (verse five), *i.e.*, in the natural, physical state: sin has beguiled man, through his desire and effort to justify his own salvation by observing the commandments of the law, to do works which still terminate in his death (*cf.* Rom. 7:7-25, II Cor. 3:6).

The theological meaning of verse four. Since the proper theological understanding of any text is dependent first upon a correct understanding of its components, I will here (and in subsequent chapters) give an analysis of its constituent parts, insofar as they are relevant for the discussion.

ὥστε followed by an independent clause indicates a consequence which follows from a preceding argument or statement: "so," "therefore," "for this reason."

Ἀδελφοί μου, "my brothers," is used frequently in the New Testament to denote "fellow Christians," and is used in this way in some 130 places in Paul. Although the significance of this term as a religious relationship was immensely developed by Christianity,

there can be no doubt, however, that ἀδελφός is one of the religious titles of the people of Israel taken over by the Christian community.¹

Καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ, "you also were put to death to the law," creates one of the two major problems in interpreting this verse. Who are the "you" who were put to death? We may presume that they are the ἀδελφοί; but are they "totally dead" selves? It is strange to speak of persons belonging to someone in a fruitful way after they have been put to death. But if they are not "really dead," how then may they be "dead to the law"? Certainly not by simply renouncing the law, for a law is not invalidated for an individual simply because he becomes aware of his inability to keep it; the fullest conviction of his inability to keep the law, and of its impotence to do him any effectual service, would not even begin to terminate his bondage to the law. One possible explanation, proposed by E. F. Gifford, is that the ὑμεῖς is not the whole self but the old self, *i.e.*, the παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος ("our old man") which was

¹Hans Freiherr von Soden, "Ἀδελφός," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1964), I, 145.

crucified in Christ (Rom. 6:6), thereby leaving the remaining or "new" self free to belong to another.² Another solution to this problem arises from the meaning of "dead to the law," as freedom from its power, as having satisfied its demands. The question "How is this possible?" leads us into the second major problem in this verse:

What are we to understand by διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ("through the body of Christ")? This is the most important question for the theological understanding of this passage, for on its answer hangs man's freedom from the law, and thence from sin and death; it is, essentially, *the* soteriological question for Pauline theology. Since the law is invalidated and man set free from it only through death, and since the addressees of this letter were presumably still very much alive, we can be certain that it is the death of Jesus which constitutes the point of reference in our text. But how is the condition of the Christians in Rome related to the death of Jesus? In other words, what is the full meaning, in this phrase, of that single preposition διὰ?

For the answer to these questions, we must look into those passages in Paul in which the believer is said in some sense to have died, and in which that death is in some way related to the death of Jesus. The most important such passage, and the first to which we shall turn, is Rom. 6:2-11. Here Paul follows the declaration of the

²William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (in *The International Critical Commentary*; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 173.

death of the believer by the explanation that "as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death" (verse three); "we have become united with the likeness of his death" (verse five); "Our old man was crucified together with him" (verse six); and "we died with Christ" (verse eight). Careful comparison of this passage with Rom. 7:4 reveals two striking facts: (1) Rom. 7:4a and b is a summary of the content of Rom. 6:2-11,³ and Rom. 7:4c is a summary of the remainder of that chapter. (2) Therefore the avenue through which the individual Christian becomes a participant in the death of Jesus must be either equivalent to, or intimately related to, the content of Rom. 6:2-11. That avenue of participation, introduced by the preposition *διὰ*, is baptism in Rom. 6:4 and the body of Christ in Rom. 7:4. The result of the foregoing analysis is that the term "body of Christ" in this passage is summarized in Rom. 6:2-11, and is closely related to Christian baptism. In answer to the threefold question of our exegetical investigations outlined above--whether "body of Christ" refers to the physical body on the cross, the Christian community, or in some way, both--the secondary literature takes various stands in the exegesis of this passage. Albert Schweitzer, C. H. Dodd, and others favor the "community" interpretation of this passage.⁴ Eduard Schweizer and others believe that

³Cf. Betz, *op. cit.*; and Herbert M. Gale, *The Use of Analogy in the Letters of Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 191 ff.

⁴Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: Black, 1931), p. 118; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1932), pp. 101 f.

Paul is speaking solely of the body on the cross:

One should not doubt that Paul was thinking of Jesus' body that died on the cross in order to free us from the law. For in chapter 7 he deals at some length with what it means to live under the law, and at the beginning of chapter 8 he explains how God overcame the curse of the law in the flesh of Jesus executed on the cross.⁵

J. A. T. Robinson holds that Rom. 7:4 makes sense only if one presupposes that Paul speaks here of both meanings:

Christians have died in, with and through the crucified body of the Lord (have a share, that is, in the actual death that He died unto sin historically, 'once for all' (Rom. 6.10, R.V.M.)) because, and only because, they are now in and of his body in the 'life that he liveth unto God,' *viz.*, the body of the Church.

. . . .
'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law *through the body of Christ*; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead.' Here the words in italics mean *both* 'through the fact that Christ in His flesh-body died to the law' *and* 'through the fact that you now are joined to and are part of that body.'⁶

The conclusion that I arrive at with regard to this passage is this: The term "through the body of Christ" in Rom. 7:4 refers literally to the physical death of the flesh-body of Christ on the cross, through which the possibility is opened for the individual to be freed from the law. One must quickly add that Paul's point is only that death releases one from the law. His point is not that the Christ who died represented the law, and that thus the law died with him; nor is the point that the relationship between Christ and the

⁵Eduard Schweizer, *The Church as the Body of Christ* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 42.

⁶John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 47.

Christians is a marriage relationship. The point of connection begins and ends with the idea that death releases one from the obligations of the law.

The only evidence that might support the interpretation of σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in this passage as the Christian community is the fact that Rom. 6:2-11 (to which Rom. 7:4 points) is a baptismal passage, and baptism into Christ is the initiation of a person into the Christian community. The conclusion might then be drawn that the body of Christ in this passage is *ipso facto* the Christian community. This argument has, it seems to me, one critical weakness: It assumes that man is saved by initiation into the Christian community, and then secondarily and through that initiation becomes related to the death of Christ. Based on what studies I have made of Paul's soteriology, I must conclude that he understood the death of Christ, and the individual's participation in that event (symbolized in baptism), to be the determinative factor in his (the individual's) salvation. That in baptism the individual became a part of the body of Christ as the Church was secondary in terms of priority, even if temporally this incorporation was symbolized in the same sacral act.

Further support for our conclusion that there is in Rom. 7:4 (*cf.* 6:2-11) no reference to the body of Christ as the community of Christians is found in the number of problems there would be in attempting to reconcile this view within the context of Rom. 6:2-11: It is certainly the individual Christian rather than his community who is buried with Christ, who walks in newness of life, who has been united

with the likeness of his death, whose "old man" was crucified with him, whose body of sin was destroyed.

Our next step in trying to determine whether Paul is here using σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ to refer to the physical body or to the Christian community is to look into how he understands the identification of death and the believer in other passages. Based upon this type of quick investigation, we may conclude the probable understanding reflected in Rom. 7:4.⁷ In Gal. 2:19 it is obvious that Paul is speaking of his own relationship with Christ: "For I, through the law, died to the law in order that I might live to God." Gal. 4:4-5 is a Christological construct, speaking implicitly about the death of the Son of God (and not the death of the individual) "in order that he might redeem those under the law." "Those under the law" must here be understood as a reference either to separate individuals or to the nation Israel, and not to a collective Christian community. Gal. 3:13 also speaks about the death of Christ on the cross and not about the dying of believers: "Christ redeemed us out of the curse of the law becoming a curse on our behalf, because it has been written: Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree."

The deutero-Pauline literature has correctly understood the intent of Paul in these passages about the individual and death,

⁷I am aware that to assume that Paul is always consistent in his use of terms would not only destroy the purpose of this study, but would greatly underestimate his creativity as an author. I do believe, however, that in some cases a study of the way he customarily uses a term can establish some probability concerning how he understands it in general.

saying to the Christians at Colossae: "Also you then, having been alienated and [made] enemies by [the] evil works in your mind, but now he [the Son, Col. 1:13] reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" (Col. 1:21 f.). Obviously the evil works in one's mind which alienated him from God are the product of the individual, and "the body of his flesh" can refer only to Christ's physical body. And further, in the letter to the Ephesians, the author speaks of reconciling the Gentiles and the Jews, "in order that he might create the two in himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in himself" (Eph. 2:15 f.). Here again it is the death of Christ which effects the unity and thus creates hope for salvation, and not membership in the Christian community.

III. CONCLUSION

From the evidence of the preceding texts, we may conclude that what Paul speaks of in these passages is the body of Christ on the cross, and not the body of Christ as the Church. The question that remains to complete the investigation of the meaning of the body of Christ in Rom. 7:4 is this: "Which body of Christ is this that is on the cross?" The answer to this question has been stated in my pre-suppositions and may be extracted from the whole of Paul's theology, particularly from the pre-Pauline hymn which he quotes in Phil. 2:5-11: It is the pre-existent Christ, the pre-existent Redeemer, that is crucified.

CHAPTER III

EXEGESES OF THE EUCHARISTIC PASSAGES

I. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXTS

I Corinthians 11:24. And having given thanks he broke [it] and said: This is my body, on your behalf; do this for a remembrance of me.

I Corinthians 10:16-17. (16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

(17) Because there is one bread, we, the many, are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

I Corinthians 11:27, 29. (27) Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord inappropriately will be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. (29) For the one eating and drinking not discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

II. EXEGESES OF THE TEXTS

The Eucharistic passages will be dealt with in the order of the increasing complexity in the understanding which they presuppose of the term *σῶμα*.

I Corinthians 11:24. In this passage Paul is quoting tradition which he has received "from the Lord," by which we may conclude

that he received it either by direct revelation from the resurrected Christ, or from early Christian tradition which he affirms as going back to the historical Jesus. Since what he proceeds to quote is part of the Eucharistic liturgy which also comes down to us in almost identical language in the tradition behind the synoptic gospels,¹ the evidence points toward the latter interpretation. It is apparent from the context (verses 24-26) that both these liturgical acts were meant to identify the participant with the death of the one who is their Lord, and even to redeclare that death on their own behalf until the parousia (verse 26).

The theological question which arises is whether both of these terms are to be taken together as a unit, communicating the same theological concept, or whether they are unrelated, having nothing in common except that aspect of each which alludes to the death of the Christ. Those who are led in the direction of the first interpretation presuppose that since both body and blood are mentioned, that they are a unit and must be equivalent to "flesh and blood" in the Hebrew sense, pointing to a purely physical existence. This theory would advance the idea that the Aramaic words were rendered "body and blood" rather than "flesh and blood" by mistake,² or that they were translated in that way because the teaching was familiar that "flesh

¹Mark 14:22//Matt. 26:26//Luke 22:19. All include the words τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμά μου, and Luke's tradition includes also the phrase τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον.

²Eduard Schweizer reaches this conclusion (*op. cit.*). Even Ignatius misunderstands σὰρξ and σῶμα to be equivalent for Paul.

and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50; on the other hand *cf.* the use of flesh and blood as a unit in Jn. 6:53-56). But these arguments are far from convincing.

The alternative, that body and blood here have absolutely nothing in common (other than that they both include, among other things, reference to the death of Christ), recommends itself convincingly as more tenable. The fact that this liturgical tradition is transmitted by Mark cannot be used as evidence that it goes back to the Aramaic; in fact the contrary would seem to be the case. Mark is, like Paul, a Hellenistic Christian and, like him, would incorporate the Eucharistic liturgy of his own church. So in the final analysis, whether this liturgy goes back to the life of Jesus and of the earliest Christianity cannot be determined by an analysis of these texts.

But for our investigation into the meaning of the term *σῶμα*, it is sufficient to disclose my position--I am unconvinced by the argument in favor of the identification of *σῶμα* and *σῶμα*, and therefore will not eliminate from consideration relevant nuances of meaning inherent in the Hellenistic usage of the term *σῶμα*. Eduard Schweizer has correctly observed that

there was in the development of the Greek language an understanding of body that proved to be an excellent tool for expressing a new idea for which the Hebrew language had no equivalent term. We have seen that in the time of the New Testament, 'body' frequently meant 'unity,' 'wholeness,' and that it was used particularly of the unity and wholeness of the cosmos.³

³Eduard Schweizer, *The Church as the Body of Christ* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 20.

That Paul has been influenced by the Hellenistic understanding of σῶμα, cannot be denied; but he has not simply taken it over without change or addition. For Paul, the σῶμα is necessary for human existence--even the existence after death. Consistent with the Hellenistic usage, when Paul speaks of 'body,' he means the whole person and not some part of the whole. Bultmann has accurately noted that for Paul, man cannot *have* a σῶμα; he *is* σῶμα:⁴ the σῶμα is the center of personhood, the "I" of the being. That Paul cannot conceive of existence of any sort without a body can be shown in several passages, the most obvious of which is I Cor. 15:35-44:

But someone will say: How are the dead raised? And with what sort of body do they come? Foolish man, that which you sow is not made alive unless it dies; and that which you sow, it is not the body which will be, but a naked grain, whether it be of wheat or some other; but God gives to it a body as he wished, and to each of the seeds [he gives its] own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but indeed there is one of men, and another flesh of animals, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. And [there are] heavenly bodies, and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is different indeed from the [glory] of the earthly. [There is] one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural [ψυχικόν] body, it is raised a spiritual [πνευματικόν] body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual [body].

So for Paul, at least, the concept of σῶμα reaches farther than that expressed by the Jewish "flesh and blood" idea, in that it denotes

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951) I, 194.

not only the physical existence of a person, but that on-going identity which he is both before and after death.

The two sacramental acts--the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup--are from the beginning distinguishable within the tradition. About the fact that in their order of worship the Corinthians first had the breaking of the bread, then the meal, and then the cup, there can be little dispute.⁵ The purposive gathering of the congregation for the breaking of the bread for liturgical reasons occurs apart from the cup in Acts 20:7; and the revelation of the manifestation of the risen Lord to the disciples in the Emmaus story occurred with the breaking of the bread and without mention of the cup (Lk. 24:30ff.). So although the phrase "breaking of the bread" might have been already by the time of Luke a recognized phrase denoting the whole Eucharistic meal (as many theologians posit), it is by no means certain that the breaking of the bread and the cup were associated from the beginning. They both could be--and the preceding evidence would support the supposition that they originally were--independent ways of expressing participation in the total Christ. They were, in other words, parallel but not supplementary sacramental symbols; participation in the cup identifies the participant with the activity of God through Christ on the cross, while identification with the body through participation in the breaking of the bread unites the participant with the pre-existent

⁵Cf. Lk. 22:20, I Cor. 11:25.

Redeemer in his activity as Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. If this were true, the two probably would have become associated not on the conceptual level, but through liturgical practices, both being common and regular acts of worship.

I Corinthians 10:16-17. It is significant that the cup again here refers to the death of Christ, and participation in the cup is participation in the shedding of his blood. This act is mentioned within this context probably because (1) it has come to be identified with the breaking of the bread, and (2) it is later (verse 21) to be contrasted with the pagan ritualistic relationship of the pagan worshipper with his gods. That it is not as significant as the breaking of the bread as a symbol of Christian unity will be readily seen in verse seventeen: when Paul speaks of unity, he associates this concept only with the bread, associating only the death of Christ with the cup. He seems even to distinguish between the participation in the cup and the participation in the table (verse 27); for him the unity is to be associated with the σῶμα, and the αἷμα is participation in something else which is not essential for the supper.

From form-critical analysis, we can see that the rhetorical questions in verse sixteen assume that the interpretation of the cup and bread as communion with the blood and body of Christ is commonly accepted; the Corinthians probably would have answered "Of course!" to both questions. But in verse seventeen, suddenly two new ideas are evident: (1) We are no longer merely participants in the body of Christ; rather we somehow *are* (the) body of Christ.

(2) The reason why we can participate in the former body of Christ, the crucified and resurrected Redeemer, is that we are this latter body of Christ. We may conclude from this evidence that verse seventeen is Pauline interpretation of the commonly-held viewpoint expressed in verse sixteen.⁶

For our purpose of defining the meaning of σῶμα for Paul, the real problem of this passage then lies in the fact that we have here two ideas of the σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ: one is the communion with the crucified Christ (κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), and the other is the community with the believers (ἐν σῶμα οἱ πολλοί ἐσμεν). The relationship between the body of the crucified Christ and the one body of the Church seems to be a causal one: "The bread which we break, is it not a community with the body of Christ? For [ὅτι, because] one bread, one body" In other words, the logic of the argument appears to be that because we have communion with the one body (the Church) through the one bread, therefore we have communion with the crucified Christ, the Redeemer. The relationship between these two ideas of the body of Christ is therefore such that if and when an individual breaks away from the one, he thereby effects a break with the other.

Paul is dealing in this passage specifically with the Eucharistic meal as a part of the ritual of the presently-existing

⁶For a more thorough form-critical examination of this problem, cf. Ernst Käsemann, "The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 109 ff.

body of Christ--the Church. (It is within the liturgical celebrations of the Church that this ritual is at home, *i.e.*, that it has its *Sitz im Leben*.) He therefore begins his argument with the body of Christ as the community of believers, and develops from that point what participation in that ritual means. We have seen that the bread, for Paul as for most early Christians, means communion with the body of Christ; but for Paul that communion can only be authentic if the union of the individual with the body of Christ as the Church is preserved. As soon as an individual breaks with the unity of the Church, then he no longer communes with the crucified Christ on the cross.

One must recognize that in the overall context, Paul is here arguing against participation in the pagan rituals (verses 14, 18-21). The question on the part of the Corinthians was whether one could have communion with Christ and with the demons at the same time; it was within the context of this question that Paul deals with the Eucharist.

The answer Paul gives to this question is a resounding "No! One cannot have communion with both Christ and the demons." The reason, for Paul, is that communion with Christ means participation in the whole process of God's redemption, while participation in pagan rituals does the opposite. To participate in a competing process of redemption--another religion, contrary to God's plan for redemption--would effect a break with the unity of the body as the brotherhood of Christians. Therefore when one does this, he destroys

his own participation in the communion with the crucified Christ-- which is the redemption process. So Paul argues from the unity of the bread as the body in the Eucharist, through the unity of those participating in the Eucharistic celebration as the one body of Christ, to the communion of the participants with the crucified body of Christ.

We have seen that it is not the end result of this chain of Paul's development, the connection of participation in the bread and unity with the crucified Christ, that is new for the Corinthians; rather what is new is the idea that participation in the Eucharistic bread means identification with the body of Christ now--union with the Church. As Käsemann has observed, Paul's distinctive combination of the sacrament and the Church as the body of Christ can only be explained historically on the basis of the Gnostic myth of an Archetypal Man, who is also the Redeemer.⁷ As he has stated,

If it is the element of the bread which, according to the traditional primitive Christian understanding, conveys participation in the Body of Christ, then the Apostle modifies this tradition to the point where participation in Jesus and his body becomes identical with incorporation into the Church as the Body of Christ.⁸

The identification of the Christian, through participation in the Eucharistic bread, with the resurrection and on-going life of Christ-- this identification depends on the ancient myth of

the Archetypal Man, who is also the Redeemer, with his immense body. The Body of Christ is the realm into which we are incorporated with our bodies and to which we are called to render

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 110.

service in the body, *i.e.* total service, service which embraces all our different relationships in and to the world Just because he is using σῶμα in this exact sense [*i.e.* as the whole man, with his various possibilities and relationships], he can afford to leave the interpretative gloss τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν hanging in the air, he can correlate σῶμα and αἷμα in the first and second formulae of Institution, finally he can think of our incorporation into the 'mystical' body of Christ as effected by means of the 'eucharistic' σῶμα Χριστοῦ in the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 10.17).⁹

So through the participation in the bread of the Eucharist, we have become identified with the body of the crucified Christ, and thereby come under the καινὴ διαθήκη ("new decree"¹⁰) which his death established. An excursus of this new διαθήκη is included in the following section; for our purposes here, we need only recognize that the objective content of the new διαθήκη is the body of Christ, and that participation in this διαθήκη and in the sacrament that celebrates it is understood by Paul as the gift of the exalted Christ. Therefore through participation in the community's celebration of the Lord's Supper, and by no other means, does the Christian remain within the body of the resurrected Christ--*i.e.*, does he receive salvation--in Paul's understanding.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰It is my belief that the translation so popular in English translations "new covenant" is most unfortunate in this place and misses the true meaning of the Greek. In English dictionaries, definitions of "covenant" invariably begin with the words "an agreement between" The term "decree" or "ordinance" would come much closer to the meaning of διαθήκη in Paul, for the death of Christ had nothing to do with an agreement; rather it was the foundation for the proclamation of God's decree of the present reality of his kingdom, and of His intention ultimately to save "all the nations." Cf. Johannes Behm, "Διαθήκη" in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) II, 124-134.

I Corinthians 11:27, 29. The context of these sayings about the body of Christ, along with that of 11:24 discussed above, is a reprimand by Paul of the practices of the Corinthians when they came together for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is apparent from the context that the more well-to-do Corinthians were eating and drinking too much and too soon, while the poorer and less fortunate, who probably came later because of the hours demanded by their more menial tasks during the day, frequently went without food during these suppers. Those who could do so were, in effect, having their own (ἴδιον) supper rather than waiting and celebrating with the whole congregation the Lord's (κυριακόν) supper; the result is that the Church is thereby shown to be despised, and the poor put to shame. Paul is scolding the Corinthians severely for this action, so inconsistent with the intent of the Lord's Supper.

From the standpoint of form-critical analysis, one cannot help from being impressed by the striking frequency with which legal concepts and phrases occur. As Käsemann has acknowledged,

συνέρχεσθαι is the acknowledged term in antiquity for the official assembling of the *demos*, the 'people', and has obviously been taken over to denote the assembling of the Christian community for worship at the Lord's Supper. The antithesis between κυριακόν and ἴδιον δείπνον is so strongly emphasized that we are led to recall the constitutional use of the first adjective. Neither can we help noticing the stress laid towards the end of the passage on the verb κρῖναι and its derivatives; ἀναξίως (in its formal meaning--'not appropriate') and ἔνοχος are both surely to be understood in a legal sense. If κατ'αγγέλιον is to be translated 'proclaim', that fits in admirably with what has steadily come to be accepted as the meaning of διαθήκη--'decree' or 'ordinance'. God's eschatological ordinance must be proclaimed on earth, and this is exactly what

the assembled Christian community does when it celebrates the Eucharist. Παράλαμβάνειν and παραδιδόναι may safely be taken as the equivalents of the rabbinic terms *qibēl* and *masar*, which connote the unbroken and legitimate succession of tradition and at the same time define the content of the tradition as authentic revelation. The account of the Last Supper is thus a formulation of sacred Law.¹¹

From the implications of this conclusion, along with a close look at the content of this passage, one can arrive at several pertinent observations. First, it is not enough to repeat regularly the actions of the Eucharist, and to believe that in doing so one is redeclaring the death of Jesus. For from Paul's concluding gloss (ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ, verse 26), as well as from the already-existing liturgy of the Lord's Supper, it becomes clear that the meaning of this is related not merely to the literalistic proclamation of the death of Jesus, but also to the redemption that arises out of it.

A second observation is that, as sacral law, the tenets in verses 27 and 29 are valid until the author of the dictum changes it; in other words, the celebration of the Eucharist is commanded by the Lord as a remembrance of his death *until he comes*. The importance of this concept for our problem is related to the way in which the Lord's Supper was being celebrated by some of the Corinthians. They appear to have been celebrating this meal as an earthly anticipation of the eschatological banquet, consistent with their view that the day of the resurrection had already occurred (I Cor. 15); in other words, they see themselves as already redeemed and no longer on the way. Paul is here correcting this misconception,

¹¹Käsemann, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 f.

emphasizing that they still stand where the Lord's Supper has its appointed place, namely, between the crucifixion and the Parousia. Any manner of celebrating this supper that is inconsistent with the will of its founder is ἀναξίως, inappropriate.

In verse 27, the introduction is in the form of a legal formulation¹², and explicitly warns of judgment in the eschaton (as substantiated by the use of the eschatological future ἔσται) for those who fail to see the self-manifestation of Christ in the Eucharist, and to celebrate it accordingly. The possibilities open for Paul with regard to the celebration of the meal are twofold: Either one unites himself with the Christian community in this proclamation of the death of Jesus and all that is based on that death; or he unites with the world in bringing about his death. Failing to understand the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to act accordingly in relationship with the other celebrants is precisely the latter--sharing guilt for the death of Jesus with the world.¹³

The third observation that can be made on the content of this passage is that it is the σῶμα of Jesus who died for us, the σῶμα of the Redeemer, with which the Christian has communion in the Eucharist, and not simply with the σῶμα of the Church. The ritual is part of this latter σῶμα of the Church, and the communicants are members of this σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ; but the communion is with the Redeemer. That

¹²This is in partial disagreement with Käsemann (*ibid.*, p. 122), who calls the form a threat of judgment, and then explains that it is also the formulation of a law.

¹³*Cf.*, *ibid.*, pp. 122-127 for an excellent development of the self-manifestation of Christ as Judge in the Eucharist.

the Eucharist is merely the gathering of the members of a congregation for fellowship would be an inappropriate interpretation; but likewise the idea that an individual Christian has communion with the crucified Christ through his own meal, or through a meal with a selected few other members of the Church, apart from communion with the larger congregation--this likewise is inappropriate, and would be justification for the judgment of God. Communion with Christ can *only* be had as a communion of Christians, Paul is telling us here--only a congregation in the Christian sense can have communion with Christ, and the individual, only as a member of that congregation. The communion of the Christian congregation is at the same time communion with the present body of Christ and the body of Christ who died on the cross for it--these two conceptions of the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ are one and the same $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$.

In verse 19, Paul clearly develops his view that individualistic observation of the Lord's Supper is inappropriate (if not theoretically impossible). One can have communion with Christ only as a part of the Christian brotherhood, and as soon as that brotherhood is destroyed, the meal that one celebrates is no longer communion with Christ, regardless of what other rubrics are carefully performed. The brotherhood of Christians is the efficacious link between the Church- $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ and the historical, crucified- $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$; when one destroys this link¹⁴ by breaking with the brotherhood, he has destroyed his

¹⁴The connection between the individual Christian and the Christian community can best be characterized in terms of the $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ -

link with the crucified Christ, and therefore, with his own salvation.

Μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα (not discerning the body), then, must mean two things in this context: It must mean, in the first place, not recognizing the presence of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist itself; and it must mean, in the second place, not recognizing the brotherhood, not having communion in the full sense of Christian ἀγάπη with all the other members of the Christian community.¹⁵

III. CONCLUSION

With regard to Paul's use of σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in the Eucharistic passages, we can conclude the following: (1) In I Cor. 11:24, the σῶμα refers to the body of Jesus on the cross. (2) In I Cor. 10:16-17, Paul uses the unity of the σῶμα as the Eucharistic bread to argue for the unity of the communicants in the σῶμα as the congregation, through which participation in the σῶμα of the crucified Christ is effected. (3) In I Cor. 11:27, σῶμα is the physical body of the Lord, used here to refer to his death. (4) In I Cor. 11:29, the σῶμα is not only the Church, but also the pre-existent Redeemer who is the eschatological Judge.

relationship spoken of so frequently in Paul (e.g. I Cor. 13; II Cor. 10:1; Rom. 12:9ff., 13:8ff.).

¹⁵It does not mean "discerning the body of Christ from ordinary bread," as one can read in Friedrich Buchsel, "Διακρίνω" in Kittel, *op. cit.*, III, 946-949.

So Paul can use the term σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (at least within the context of Eucharistic discussion) as the bread in the celebration, the physical crucified body of Jesus, the community of Christians, and the eschatological Judge.¹⁶

¹⁶Here again I recognize that some authorities take the reference of σῶμα to be equivalent to only one of these meanings in a particular passage, and to refer only in a metaphorical way to one or more of the other meanings. That Paul makes use of metaphor, allegory, and analogy to communicate his position cannot be denied; but I do not believe that his use of σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in the Eucharistic passages is to be understood in this way, in the understanding of Paul.

CHAPTER IV

EXEGESIS OF I CORINTHIANS 12:4-31

I. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

(4) Now there are allotments of gifts, but the same Spirit; (5) and there are allotments of ministries, and the same Lord; (6) and there are allotments of activities, but the same God producing all things in all. (7) And to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to advantage. (8) For to one through the Spirit is given a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge through the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) and to another activities of power [*i.e.*, working of miracles], and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits, to another varieties of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues: (11) But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one by himself as he wills. (12) For just as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also Christ. (13) For indeed by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. (14) For indeed the body is not one member, but many. (15) If the foot should say: Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not for this [reason] not of the body. (16) And if the ear should say: Because I am not an eye, I am not of

the body, it is not for this [reason] not of the body. (17) If all the body were an eye, where [would be] the hearing? If all hearing, where the smelling? (18) But now God put the members, each one of them in the body just as he willed. (19) And if all were one member, where [would be] the body? (20) But now [there are] many members indeed, but one body. (21) And the eye is not able to say to the hand: I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet: I have no need of you. (22) But by much more the weaker-seeming members of the body are necessary, (23) and we place around these parts of the body which we think to be less honorable, more abundant honor, and our unpresentable [members] have greater presentability, (24) but the presentable of us have no need. But God composed the body, giving greater honor to the one lacking, (25) in order that there be no division in the body, but the members may have the same concern on behalf of one another. (26) And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Or if a member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. (27) You are body of Christ, and members individually. (28) And God has appointed some in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then powers, then gifts of healing, helpful deeds, administration, kinds of tongues. (29) Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all powers [workers of miracles]? (30) Do all have gifts of cures? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (31) But strive for the greater gifts. And yet I declare to you a still better way.

II. EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT

Before one can begin to answer the question "What does 'body of Christ' mean for Paul in this passage?" he must again, as with the previous passages, first look into the context of the passage, and then exegete the relevant verses.

The general context: I Corinthians 12-14. That Paul is disputing a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the manifestation of the Spirit in chapters twelve through fourteen is a fact agreed upon by most exegetes.¹ The purpose of these chapters is seen to be one of two possibilities: Either it is to arbitrate some disagreement or uncertainty at Corinth,² or it is an extensive attempt to persuade those at Corinth who held views contrary to his own.³ In either case, it is here evident that Paul is answering a question about how to test for the Spirit, raised by the Corinthians who presuppose that it is manifested only through the speaking in tongues, or possibly also through the working of miracles.

¹Cf. Clarence Tucker Craig, "I Corinthians," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), X, 7f.; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1914), p. 257; Eduard Schweizer, *The Church as the Body of Christ* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 57; John Coolidge Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), pp. 186 f.

²Craig, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8; Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

³Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 193; Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Paul's argument is that the Spirit is not identified only with speaking in tongues or miracle-working; moreover, these were not even sure signs of the presence of the Spirit. In verses one through three he reminded the Corinthians that even in their former heathen life, unusual phenomena had been a part of their experience. The primary point that Paul wants to drive home in these three chapters is that the Spirit is manifested in many various gifts which are widely distributed; that all these gifts are important, but that *if* some priority had to be assigned to them, that those which were for the "edification"⁴ of the many rather than the few would rank higher; and that therefore speaking in and interpreting tongues and miracle-working ranked last, while apostleship and prophecy ranked first.

With this all-too-brief summary of Paul's argument in the larger context, we may turn to the specific passage at hand.

Form-critical analysis. I Cor. 12:4-31, as a unit, can be form-critically classified as a diatribe. The diatribe was an ancient speech form in Hellenistic philosophy and literature which made use of such stylistic traits as direct address of the readers (*e.g.*, verse 27), rhetorical questions (*e.g.*, verses 29f.), and the use of examples and analogies from the experience of everyday life (*e.g.*, verses 14ff.).

⁴The concept of "edification" is related to the οἰκοδομή, an edifice-concept used in reference to physical structures in the time of Paul. In Paul's thinking, this concept parallels σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The composition of this diatribe might be broken down into the following component parts:

Verses four through seven state the thesis: God is a unity, but the distribution and diversity of his gifts is great. Verses eight through ten offer examples of this diversity, and verse eleven gives a summary restatement of the thesis, emphasizing that distribution of these gifts is the will of the Spirit.

In verses twelve through twenty-six, Paul uses the image of the body with its diversity of members and the variety of their various functions, as an analogy to the Church and its members. The direct application of this analogy is made unmistakable in verses 12c and 27. In verses 28-30 Paul illustrates the application of his excursus on the body to the Church, while verse 31 contains a concluding paraenesis for the reader to strive for the higher gifts, by which Paul means those gifts which edify the greater number of people. It is well to note that this imperative is followed by the great chapter on love as an example of the better way.

- *Theological exegesis.* In the first three verses of this chapter, Paul has given the real measure of whether an utterance-- or an action, prophecy, teaching, or whatever--is of the Spirit: Those words and actions which proclaim Jesus as Lord are of the Spirit; those which dishonor him cannot be. An extension of this principle is that those things which build up the body of Christ are of the Spirit, while those things which do not, or which destroy the body of Christ, are not.

It is with this understanding of the operation of the Spirit of God that Paul is able to understand a wide diversity and distribution of gifts as individual results of the activity of the Spirit. In verses four through six, Paul affirms first of all that these *Χαρίσματα* are gifts of grace and are not based on man's own talents or merits (verse four); secondly, that they are ministries or services, dependent for their very existence on their other-centeredness (verse five); and thirdly, that they are actions or events rather than positions or titles (verse six). Although these three verses constitute what might be called a trinitarian statement, Schweizer is correct in his observation that this is not the emphasis in this passage:

Paul is not interested in an ontological doctrine of the Trinity, but rather in the fact that God encounters man time and time again in different ways, as the Spirit, as the Lord Jesus, and as the Creator, being always the one God.⁵

In verse seven Paul affirms that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each Christian, and he reaffirms that the purpose of all of these manifestations is the common good and edification of the congregation, for the profit of all.

Paul does not seem to be classifying the nine gifts which he mentions in verses eight through ten, and he is certainly not listing them in his order of priority.⁶ Robertson and Plummer note, however,

⁵Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁶For some indication of the order of Paul's priority of these gifts, cf. Rom. 12:6-8 and I Cor. 12:28-30.

that taking each ἐρέω as marking a new division yields an intelligible result, namely, three classes dealing with (1) the intellect, (2) faith, and (3) tongues.⁷ Paul's emphasis here, however, is on the distribution (and, secondarily, on the diversity) of the gifts. Against the prevailing view of the Corinthians--at least, of his opponents at Corinth--that the Spirit was manifest only in the glossolalia, Paul was arguing that the manifestations of the Spirit cannot and must not be thought to be limited to glossolalia. Speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues are not the only legitimate expressions of the Spirit's activity; on the contrary, as Paul goes on to show in his example of the distribution of responsibilities and diversities of activities of the various members of the body, the fact that an activity is not connected with ecstatic outbursts in incomprehensible tongues does not make it any less a gift of the Spirit.

"The one and the same Spirit" in verse eleven, defined in verse three as God's Spirit, is here doing what verse six and, by analogy, verse eighteen, have already told us that God does, namely, the distributing of gifts. Καθὼς βούλεται is a technical term connected with the creative activity of God, and calls attention to the fact that God's Spirit purposely decides and discriminates as He distributes various gifts to individuals with the intention that they benefit the Church as a whole.⁸ The ἰδίᾳ emphasizes the indi-

⁷Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁸*Cf. ibid.*, pp. 268 f.

vidual (rather than the *en masse*) nature of the Spirit's dealing with men.

Verse twelve introduces the application of the concept of the body into Paul's argument; and it is instructive that he begins this, the longest discussion of the body of Christ as the Church, with the words:

For just as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also *Christ*.⁹

As Schweizer has noted,¹⁰ it is somewhat surprising to the modern mind that he did not say "so also the Church." It is for Paul the unity of the person of Christ which is primary. He moves in his argument from the unity of Christ, like the unity of a human body, to the unity of the Church. It is within that unity that Christians are united. The point in this passage is not that the different members need to be united with each other in order to be the body of Christ; the point is rather that there must be varieties of members if there is to be a body at all. The focus in this passage is not the unity, but the diversity and distribution. Paul's argument, then, is that just as a body cannot consist of only one member but must have many, so also the body of Christ, if it is to be a body, must have variety and distribution in membership.

If it can be said that verses twelve and thirteen constitute

⁹Italics mine.

¹⁰Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

the center of the whole chapter,¹¹ we must add that verse thirteen is paramount for an understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ for Paul, for this verse contains no fewer than four essential keys to Pauline theology in this regard:

(1) "We all, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free"--this phrase points to the all-inclusiveness of the body of Christ; persons become a part of the body of Christ as individuals, equally recipients of God's grace through his redemptive activity in Jesus Christ.

(2) "Into one body"--here, undoubtedly the body of Christ in its full meaning: the body of Christ which died on the cross and the community of fellow Christians, in both of which the individual Christian participates. The essential point here is that the individual becomes a part of the unity that Christ already is; he does not in any way constitute that unity, *i.e.*, the unity is not the result of the coming together of a number of individuals. As Käsemann accurately notes, the body of Christ cannot be thought of quantitatively as the sum of its individual parts, but rather must be thought of in qualitative terms as the identity of the unified Christ in all of his members.¹²

(3) "We were baptized." Baptism is the act effecting incor-

¹¹So Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹²Ernst Käsemann, "The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 111.

poration into the body of Christ; it is in baptism that Christ is "put on."¹³ It is baptism which symbolizes participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3, 7:4; Phil. 3:10), which is identical with participation in the salvation-occurrence. In baptism, as in the participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Christian announces that he is under the dominion of the Lord, and places himself in the presence of Him who is at the same time pre-existent Redeemer and eschatological Judge.

(4) "By [the] one Spirit"--this phrase ascribes incorporation into the body of Christ to the operation of the one Spirit, and it is through the gift of the Spirit that we become partakers of the Spirit, as the gift takes on the character of the Giver. Paul frequently characterizes the *πνεῦμα* precisely as the baptismal gift (*e.g.* I Cor. 6:11, this passage, II Cor. 1:22). As Kasemann concludes,

The *πνεῦμα* is thus the sacramental gift without qualification just as we found that incorporation into the Body of Christ was the sacramental gift without qualification. . . . The gift is at once instrument and effective power just because it is participation in the Giver himself. In giving himself to us as *πνεῦμα*, the Christ incorporates us into his Body. . . . Because the Lord is the *Pneuma* and because in the sacrament the exalted Lord conveys, along with his gift, participation in himself as the Giver, therefore the gift of the sacrament must also be *Pneuma*. And so we are incorporated into the Body of the exalted Lord by means of this gift operating as effective power. Through the Spirit of Christ, I become a member of the Body of Christ.¹⁴

So we are in Christ's body--"in Christ"--because Christ has entered

¹³*Cf.* especially Gal. 3:27 and Chapter V in this study; also Rom. 13:14.

¹⁴Kasemann, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 f.

into us as πνεῦμα, i.e., because we have "Christ in us."

I am convinced by Käsemann's analysis, which traces this idea of πνεῦμα to the world of Hellenistic Gnosis. He points out that the doctrine of the transformation of man through the power of πνεῦμα is understood as a kind of natural process:

For *pneuma* is seen in Hellenistic thought as heavenly matter, very delicate in quality, which has the capacity to penetrate man's being and, in so doing, to endow him with a new nature. As the σάρξ, the earthly matter, stands in a cosmic context and forms a universal unity, while yet existing in many different vessels, so correspondingly does the πνεῦμα, the substance of the world of light in *its* sphere. It is not confined and isolated within its individual vessels but stands, with each of its parts and manifestations, in the living context of the Whole which consists of the heavenly world and nature, i.e. in the unity of the divine. This is why the myths can speak of the unity of the body of the Archetypal Man who is also the Redeemer, a body which embraces countless members. This unity is based on a common participation in the same heavenly substance--the *pneuma*--and consists in the identity with itself of the divine substance, which remains always and everywhere the same.¹⁵

One particular important element of the Hellenistic view relevant for our discussion here is that in this understanding, the earthly and heavenly worlds are filled with forces which are constantly driving towards corporeality, and thus can be fulfilled only in bodily form. Man is the object of the struggle between these two types of forces, coming into being when the earthly matter seized elements of the heavenly world. The "metamorphosis" which results from this event has a proleptic fulfillment in the cultic act; and it is in this way that the Corinthians appear to be understanding the Christian

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

sacraments. Paul's position, on the other hand, is that the Christian has not, simply by his participation in the sacrament, insured himself against any possibility of damnation now or in the future. Instead of being a simple guarantee of salvation, participation in the sacrament effects the presence of Christ as Lord and calls for obedience, as Paul makes abundantly clear in I Cor. 10:5 ff. For Paul, one cannot speak of division between reality and appearance, form and matter, interior and exterior, soul and body. Human existence is conditioned by one question: To Whom do you belong: Who is your Lord? It is precisely at this point that the Spirit enters, as a representative of not only the power, but the actual presence and self-manifestation of the Lord. Again Käsemann has succinctly and accurately concluded:

Therefore Baptism is a putting-on of Christ and an incorporation into Christ. . . . Therefore the sacrament effects the transformation of men. Because my existence is not determined by myself but by whoever is my Lord at any given time, therefore the sacrament mediates the new existence by giving me the new Lord, the one true *Kyrios* beyond and above all the lordships of the world. And therefore we are entitled at this point to speak at last of incorporation into the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not a sociological structure, it is not merely the sum of his members. But neither is it for Paul, as it had been for the Gnostics, a metaphysical structure, accessible only to the techniques of mysticism: It is not therefore the homogeneity of all the elements of the world of light. The members do not constitute either the Body itself or its unity, because this Body receives its character as well as its unity from the *Kyrios* alone. . . . Wherever the *Kyrios* is present in the *Pneuma*, there he claims men for his dominion.¹⁶

But we must quickly point out that this claiming of the Christian by

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 118.

the *Kyrios* is neither a natural process nor a mystical one. Man still has his free will, and can choose freely either the obedience which is the new dimension of Christian existence, or apostasy; baptism has not guaranteed salvation, but has established instead the possibility of, as well as the necessity for, obedience. So in this verse we have seen that Paul shares some of the basic premises of his time and world, yet draws from them quite different conclusions.

In verses 14 ff., although Paul talks solely in terms of the body, it is obvious in his choice of examples that this body already means the body of Christ as Christian community in this context. Although there are similar parables and allegories on record in which different members of the body are personified as individuals and hypothetically converse with each other or think independently,¹⁷ Paul's argument is not that the members are bound together by nature and should therefore co-operate with each other in order to survive as a body.¹⁸ His emphasis, rather, is that there must be multiplicity (a distribution and diversity of members) if there is to be a body at all. But as Robinson is correct in pointing out, the diversity derives from the pre-existent nature of the unity as organic: it is not a diversity of members which must then discover or be combined

¹⁷For a list of these references, cf. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 59 n. 1; also Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹⁸So Marcus Aurelius, who says the members are made to co-operate with one another as feet, and hands, and eyelids, and upper and lower jaws, and that to act in opposition to one another would be unnatural (ii. 1).

into a unity.¹⁹

Scholars have varying opinions as to how Paul would apply this argument to the Church. Robinson sees it as an argument in reverse of the familiar Old Testament principle that the remnant can represent the many; this latter principle stood until Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:14; *cf.* Rom. 5:15, 6:6 f.; Gal. 3:16), but now the many represent the one (Gal. 3:27-29).²⁰ Schweizer breaks the "parable" into two addresses, the first (verses 15-20) given to the members who cannot cope with their "inferiority complexes," and the second arguing against the "conceited" members, the point of the whole parable being that all of the Corinthians are first and foremost the body of Christ and only secondarily individual members.²¹ Hurd, on the other hand, does not understand the basic issue to be the threat posed by inner divisions within the church which Paul is here correcting; rather Paul was disturbed by the narrowness *and uniformity* of the Corinthians' view of the operation of the Spirit. As he goes on to say:

Paul stressed the variety of the gifts of the Spirit, not negatively, as though they represented a theological challenge to the doctrine of the unity of the Church, but positively, in order to persuade the Corinthians to broaden their viewpoint and to accept a variety of skills and ministries as actual evidence of the working of the Spirit.²²

¹⁹Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 60 f.

²¹Schweizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 62 f.

²²Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

H. D. Betz has suggested that the meaning of this example can be summarized in the three propositions given in verses fourteen, eighteen, and twenty, and illustrated in verses fifteen through seventeen, nineteen, and twenty-one through twenty-six respectively: (1) The body does not consist of one member, but many. (2) God has put the members together, each one in the body, *as he willed*. (3) Although there *are* many members, they are a part of one body.²³ I am convinced by this not only because it is a defensible stand on form-critical grounds (each proposition is in the indicative and is set apart from the preceding section--καὶ γάρ, οὖν δέ), but also because these three propositions seem to me to be direct results of extending each of the theological truths posited in verses 11b and 12a and b. The meaning of these three propositions, within the context of the question of the Corinthians which prompted this discussion, could not be mistaken by the readers: Those speaking in tongues were not the only members of the body of Christ, nor were they the only ones who had been led by the Spirit to do what they were doing. And the fact that there are many members who have experienced and who are expressing the Spirit in different ways does not indicate a split within the body of Christ or a multiplicity of bodies. All Christians have received gifts from the Spirit, and have been appointed by Him to perform diverse functions; and just as all things in the body should work together for the common good of the organism, so should the

²³Hans Dieter Betz, in a lecture presented to the seminar on Anthropological Concepts in the Theology of Paul, January 23, 1969.

members of the body of Christ, in ἀγάπη, be concerned for and share in the joys and griefs of one another. There is a value scale of gifts, and one should strive for the greater (more "edifying") gifts; but the greatest of these, which can and should work through all else, Paul goes on to depict in the following chapter: ἀγάπη.

Anthropological considerations. Bultmann notes that the Christian situation is, for Paul, paradoxical. The Christian is between the "no longer" and the "not yet" (phil. 3:12-14). So Bultmann can say of Paul's view:

Though Christian existence can, on the one hand, be described by the indicatives--we are sanctified, we are purified--nevertheless, so long as it moves within this world, it stands under the imperative. Though on the one hand, it is separated from its past and its environment, yet this separation must be newly made again and again. . . . What has happened in principle must be brought to reality in practice.²⁴

Baptism in Paul can be discussed in terms of the indicative and the imperative of salvation. These categories point to the individual and his place *within* the body of Christ, rather than pointing to the body of Christ as a sociological whole; therefore they lead us into an area only infrequently dealt with by commentators.²⁵

²⁴Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 101. (It should be noted that this passage, lifted from its context, makes Bultmann appear to be more of a Platonist than is in actuality the case.)

²⁵Betz (*op. cit.*) has pointed out that most exegetes discuss the σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in terms of the Church, and that seldom does anyone deal with the problem of the individual. He attributes this largely to the fact that most commentators are churchmen who are therefore more concerned with "corporation" than with their individuality.

The indicatives of salvation arising out of this passage have been alluded to in the theological section of this chapter, but could be briefly restated as follows:²⁶ (1) The entire salvation of the individual is a gift. We have seen that the body of Christ--the Christ of the cross and the Christ into which the Christian enters--exists as a unity *before* the individual Christian joins: he is *received into* the body of Christ; he does not constitute it. Salvation reaches the Christian from without, a gift from God, made possible through Christ, and coming through the Spirit. (2) Baptism is the initiation ritual through which one becomes a part of the body of Christ. (3) The actual gift bestowed on the individual in baptism is the πνεῦμα (II Cor. 1:22, I Cor. 12:13; *cf.* also Eph. 1:13, 4:30; Acts 2:38). (4) The reception of the Spirit is understood as a manifestation or revelation, the result of which is the χαρίσματα, the gifts. Every Christian has his manifestation of the Spirit and his χαρίσματα; therefore there is a diversity of gifts implicit in this distribution.

It seems to me that there are two imperatives in this passage. The first one is implicit in the indicative statement of verse 27: "You are [the] body of Christ, and members individually;" thus "*Be* [the] body of Christ, and *be* members individually." The Christian individual is, when he is baptized, an individual being and a member of the structure of his society (verse 13; *cf.* Gal. 3:28). Although

²⁶The basic ideas developed in the succeeding paragraphs were germinal in Betz, *op. cit.*

he continues to be what he was before, what he *is* is constantly being re-evaluated within the body of Christ, and by this re-evaluation he is changed. The primary qualification on his life is no longer what his status was outside the Church; as a member of the Church he is now free in Christ, an equal member of his body. This new qualification supersedes the restrictions of his old existence, and he is a "new creation in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17). The use of an imperative presupposes freedom, and the possibility of opting for or against that which is commanded. Thus, when speaking of the activity of the Spirit, Bultmann can say

Freedom and demand constitute a unity: Freedom is the reason for the demand, and the demand actualizes the freedom. Only when this unity is understood, is Paul's thought of the Spirit understood aright²⁷

Since the individuality of the pre-Christian man was occupied by ἀμαρτία (Rom. 7), he was at that point merely an "instrument" of ἀμαρτία. Incorporation into the body of Christ frees man and actually constitutes his individuality. The Christian is not an "instrument" of Christ in the sense that the pre-Christian man was an "instrument" of ἀμαρτία, because ἀγάπη, the obligation of the Christian, requires the decision of the individual. In other words, the activity of God frees man to choose between "flesh" and Spirit." The characteristic feature of Paul's conception of the Spirit, that which sets him apart from the popular Christian view of his day, is that the service of love within the congregation is counted among the activities of the Spirit.

²⁷Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

For Paul, one best experiences the Spirit's activity within relationships with other individuals come together in the body of Christ. All the gifts of the Spirit are capable of varying degrees of service to varying quantities of members of the body of Christ. So apart from the body, the gifts of the Spirit are impotent (if, theoretically, they can exist at all).

It is the relative value of these gifts that brings us to the second, more explicit imperative of this passage: "Strive for the greater gifts" (verse 31). We have seen that these spiritual gifts are distributed by the Spirit "as *he* willed," so on the surface such an imperative might seem meaningless. But we have ample evidence to support the supposition that the value of these gifts was determined by ἀγάπη, love, and by their "edification" of the congregation (cf. e.g. this chapter of this study and I Cor. 14). Since ἀγάπη is the essential in all of the χαρίσματα, closeness to ἀγάπη is the measure by which their relative value is to be determined. It is instructive that, for Paul, the higher gifts can be sought, and are not mechanically given; and yet from the fact that they are given according to the will of the Spirit, we may conclude that He is continually adding gifts to those who have sought them--through increased, active ἀγάπη-ministry to fellow members of the congregation.

The final point which must be made with regard to the imperative within the context of the body of Christ is that it does not allow the individual to disappear into the body of Christ; on the contrary, the individual within the body of Christ is still faced

squarely with total responsibility. Ultimately it is his choice whether he will accept the freedom that is his and act in obedience to God's commands, or whether he will act in disobedience to them and thereby sacrifice the freedom that has been given to him.

III. CONCLUSION

With regard to the meaning of σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in this passage, we can conclude the following: (1) The body in this passage refers at the same time to the body of Christ which died for man's salvation and the body of Christ which is the Church. (2) It is the πνεῦμα which connects the individual Christians to the body of Christ, and which distributes God's many gifts as he wills among them. (3) The unity of the body of Christ is axiomatic; man is introduced into the already-existing unity when he becomes a part of the body of Christ. (4) Baptism is at least one act which effects incorporation into the body of Christ. (Whether verse 13b is a reference to the cup of the Eucharist is a question which is outside the task of this study to determine. Kasemann believes it to be likely.²⁸) (5) The individuality of the Christian is not sacrificed but freed when he becomes a member of the body of Christ. (6) Ἀγάπη is the highest gift, and is present to some extent in all of the gifts, proportionate to the edifying quality of the gift.²⁹

²⁸Kasemann, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

²⁹The concept of σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Rom. 12:4ff. is sufficiently similar to that of this passage that it will not be dealt with separately in this study.

CHAPTER V

EXEGESIS OF GALATIANS 3:26-29

I. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

(26) For you are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus; (27) for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, you put Christ on. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is not male and female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are of Christ, then you are a seed of Abraham, heirs according to promise.

II. EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT

The overarching context of this passage is the rebuttal by Paul of the assertion of his opponents in Galatia that Christians must be circumcised and keep the Law. The opponents had apparently raised the question "Who are the sons of Abraham?" and had argued, based on Genesis 17, that since the divine blessings had been promised to Abraham and to his seed, that according to the covenant between God and Abraham the descendents of Abraham were to be circumcised and keep the Law. If the Gentile Christians were to inherit the promises, therefore, they too must be circumcised and keep the Law. Paul's refutation of this argument could not be literal, for the argument of his opponents was securely based on Scripture; rather Paul's argument is based on the familiar idiomatic use of the term "sons" to denote those whose lives show the characteristics of whomever or what-

ever follows in the genitive (cf. e.g., υἱοὶ βροντῆς, "sons of thunder"--Mk. 3:17; υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος, "sons of the bridechamber"--Mt. 9:15; υἱοὶ τοῦ φωτός, "children of the light"--Lk. 16:8, Jn. 12:36, Eph. 2:2, 5:6). Paul concludes that the term "sons of Abraham" need not be taken genealogically along tribal lines, but should be interpreted along religious lines as those who, like Abraham, rely on faith. Our passage is the conclusion of this defense, which began in verse six.¹

Form-critical analysis. Although there has not been enough research done in the area of form criticism in Paul for us to arrive at an indisputable conclusion, it is my opinion that this passage belongs to the ecclesiological formulae originated by Paul.² This conclusion is based largely on the shift in verse 26 to the second-person plural from the long string of first-person plural and third-person verb endings, and on the appearance of the πάντες γάρ combination which begins verse 26 and ends verse 28--a combination which in Paul usually introduces such formulations of Pauline logic (cf. I Cor. 3:21-23, Rom. 14:7-10). Verse 26 is an indicative statement of theological fact: "You are all sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus." Verse 27 and 28b are explanatory: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, you put Christ on;" "For you are all one in Christ

¹For a more detailed development of Paul's line of argument, cf. George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), pp. 83-124.

²Although verse 28 is probably adapted from Church tradition or from another source. See the section on *Theological exegesis* in this chapter.

Jesus." Verses 28a and 29 give the results of the union with Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is not male and female;" "And if you are of Christ, then you are a seed of Abraham, heirs according to promise."

Theological exegesis. In order to render into English the true meaning of verse 26, the order of the Greek should be inverted, so that we read "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through [your] faith" rather than ". . . through [your] faith in Christ Jesus." It is through existence in Christ, who is the Son of God, that the Galatians have become sons of God through the gift of faith, as Paul goes on to explain. This faith is a gift of the Spirit and has as its content both the kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, and the obedience to him that that proclamation demands. As Paul says in Rom. 8:14, "For as many as are led by [the] Spirit of God, these are sons of God;" obedience to the leadership of the Spirit is the proper response to the freedom which He gives, and is the key to sonship.

Being "baptized into Christ (verse 27) is the criterion for "putting Christ on" (verse 27) and for being "one in Christ Jesus" (verse 28b), which must be taken as equivalent for Paul. We have seen that for Paul, baptism is the ritual by means of which the Christian is introduced into the body of Christ, and that the body into which he is baptized is already a unity before the members are there.³ Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε, "putting Christ on," is a technical term for

³Cf. *ante*, pp. 38, 47.

baptism. It is not, as one can read in some commentaries, simply a reference to the donning of the garments or mask of God by the initiate, although there are religious-historical parallels to this interpretation, and early Christian baptismal practice may have included this ceremonial act.⁴ The interpretation of this phrase as "acting the part of Christ"⁵ is not inclusive of its total meaning. From the religious-historical viewpoint, the parallel that seems to me to be the most applicable to Paul's usage of this term is the Gnostic myth of the Primal Man, in which the body of the Primal Man is understood simultaneously as a garment and as the race of saved souls.⁶ The "putting on of Christ" is, for Paul, certainly more than a metaphor for behaving like Christ; for as he goes on to say in the following verse, it means becoming a part of the unity that is Christ. Our conclusion is that the authors of Colossians and Ephesians were correct in the direction of their interpretation: the putting on of Christ

⁴Albrecht Oepke, "Ενδύω," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1964), II, 319 f. Of particular interest is this practice within the Isis cult.

⁵Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 204. Cf. also Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Raymond T. Stamm, "Galatians," in *Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), X, 518 f.; and L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (Friburg: Herder & Herder, 1959), p. 221.

⁶Cf. Ernst Käsemann, "The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 111; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 178f.; Stig Hanson, *The Unity of the Church in the New Testament: Colossians and Ephesians* (Lexington: American Theological Library Association, 1963), pp. 80, 113-116.

implies that one no longer identifies with the old man and his age, but rather with the new age and the new body--the Church (*cf.* Col. 3:9ff. and Eph. 4:22ff.). That Paul is using the language of the Gnostic myth without taking it over totally can be seen in verse 28b, where the Galatians are told that they are "all one (εἷς, not ἕν) in Christ Jesus;" for the Redeemer, according to the Gnostic mythology was asexual or bisexual, and in the Gnostic myth the members of the body would not become one with each other--the emphasis is on the vertical connection with the divinity and never with the fellow members.⁷

The radically new concept about the body of Christ that this passage adds to what has already been investigated is in verse 28: the idea that with respect to equality within the body of Christ, distinctions of race, conditions of servitude, and sex, don't exist: all members are equal before God and in the presence of each other. It must not be concluded that Paul meant that henceforth these distinctions did not exist for the Christian with reference to his life outside the Christian community (I Cor. 7:17, 20, 24): the Jew was still to keep the Law (although the keeping of it was no longer to be conceived of as the way to salvation), while the Gentile need not come under the Law (I Cor. 7:18f.); the Christian slave is still a slave to his master (I Cor. 7:21f.); men and their wives were still

⁷How foreign this is from Paul's idea that unity with the body of Christ is dependent upon unity with other Christians can be readily seen in the sections dealing with I Cor. 11:24 and 11:27, 29 in Chapter III.

to relate as husband and wife (I Cor. 7:3-6). Rather we should conclude that Paul understood these distinctions to be revealed as artificial in the sight of God, and that even while we are "in the flesh," as members of Christ's body we should not allow these distinctions to be the basis for any kind of inequality in our dealings with, and loving service for, each other. In Christ all are equally united, all are made alike in that all have χαρίσματα from the πνεῦμα, all have been given their freedom from the necessity of keeping the Law for the sake of salvation, all have been given the command to minister to each other in love--in short, all have been made one person in Christ.

We mentioned above⁸ that verse 28 was probably adapted by Paul from Church tradition or another source. While the juxtapositions in I Cor. 12:13 and Col. 3:11 (with their notable absence of the male-and-female reference) would not argue conclusively for a Gnostic background for this formula, the concept of no sexual distinction has a very Gnostic sound to it, and reminds the student of comparative religions of the bisexual *Uranthropos* of Greek mythology and the bisexual Redeemer of the Gnostic Redeemer myth. We may consider in this regard the saying attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas:

Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the upper side like the under side, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female will [not] be female; when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a

⁸Page 51, note 2.

foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you shall enter [the kingdom].⁹

But we have seen that Christ is *not* bisexual in verse 28; the εἶς can only be masculine, and there is no indication that in Paul's understanding the Redeemer figure would be also female.¹⁰ The unanswered problem is twofold: (1) Assuming that Paul has taken this over from some tradition, why was such a Gnostic-sounding saying a part of the tradition in the first place? And (2) why did Paul quote it here? H. D. Betz has suggested that there might be a connection between this passage and the Gnostic quotes in I Cor. 6:12, 13; 7:1; 7:25, 26; 7:36-38; *cf.* Rev. 14:4. Particularly in I Cor. 7:36-38, dealing with spiritual marriages, there is an obvious relationship between radical sexual abstinence and the belief that the believers are one with the Redeemer, and that therefore there is no male or female.¹¹ But this question is by no means settled.

The logic of verse 29 would be quite simple had it said εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστός, "And if you are *Christ*": (1) You are Christ; (2) Christ is a seed of Abraham; therefore, (3) you are a seed of Abraham; so finally (4) you are heirs of the promise to Abraham. The problem is in the fact that the text says instead εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, "And

⁹"The Gospel of Thomas," *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1964), pp. 520f., saying 22.

¹⁰Unless "Christ" is equal to "Sophia" in I Cor. 1-2.

¹¹Hans Dieter Betz, a lecture presented to the seminar on Anthropological Concepts in the Theology of Paul, January 23, 1969.

if you are *Christ's*." Burton¹² develops his explanation (1) on the basis of verse 16b being not from Paul, (2) on the implication based on I Cor. 3:21-23 and Rom. 8:8-9 that those who have the Spirit are pleasing to God, and (3) on Rom. 8:17, 32, with the suggestion that believers are sharers in the possessions of Christ, objects of God's love. The problematic nature of basing an argument on such a string of presuppositions leads me to search for an easier solution. I should therefore propose the following:

Paul was writing to Christians who had been baptized. It would be reasonably safe to assume that they are knowledgeable of Paul's belief that baptism placed the individual within the body of Christ. It would seem to me to be acceptable therefore to assume a tacit understanding on the part of his readers that the meaning of this phrase was "You belong to Christ" in the same sense that a member of his physical body would belong to him. In any case, the logic of the theological argument holds up: the Galatians are to be included in the promise to Abraham.

III. CONCLUSION

Although the term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ does not literally occur in this passage, it is implicit in it, so that we may arrive at the following conclusions: (1) As the result of baptism, the individual both "puts Christ on" and becomes a member of the body of Christ;

¹²Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 208ff., 505-510.

therefore these can be taken as roughly equivalent. (2) Those who have been baptized and have "put Christ on" or who have become members of the body of Christ are sons of God. (3) Those who have been baptized are united in Christ Jesus, and within this unity all distinctions of race, sex, and position cease to exist. (4) Those who are members of Christ are (religiously, by religious adoption) seed of Abraham, and therefore subject to God's promise to him, without circumcision and subjugation to the Law. (5) $\Sigma\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ here means both the Christian community and the Redeemer.

CHAPTER VI

THE BODY OF CHRIST IN PAUL:

CONCLUSIONS

I. ONTOLOGICAL MEANING

The conclusion at which I have arrived, based on the preceding exegeses, is that Paul understood as an ontological unity (1) the pre-existent Son of God, incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, resurrected, and eschatological Judge; and (2) the Church as the fellowship of all Christians. Therefore in any given instance Paul can use the term "body of Christ" to refer to any of the above aspects, or any combination of them. Moreover, he can assume any of these meanings of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, even when the words $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ are not used, in reference to the activity of the Spirit within the Christian, or in reference to the Christian's activity within the Church. We have seen that in Paul, the Christian receives assurance of his personal salvation through the belief that God has raised Jesus to heavenly glory, and through identification with Him in that process. This identification is first realized in baptism, through the gift of the Spirit; it is then celebrated in the Eucharistic meal. We have seen that baptism marks the incorporation of the Christian into the unity of the body of Christ. We have seen that incorporated into this unity are both Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, men and women; and that the result of this incorporation into the body is equality and the abolition of the discriminatory meaning of

these distinctions. And we have noted that within the body of Christ the Spirit distributes gifts to the individual members "according to His will." Finally, we have been able to determine that an individual can, by failing to act in obedience within the freedom that is his, choose to set himself outside the unity of the body of Christ and thus endanger his own salvation.

With these important insights gained from exegesis of the passages dealing directly with the body of Christ in Paul, we are ready to explore briefly the intimate relationship between this concept and the whole of Pauline theology.

Most theologians agree that primitive Christianity was a syncretistic phenomenon,¹ and that those who joined the ranks of the Christian community awaiting the Parousia were conscious of themselves as the Church of the last age, as the people of God in whom were being fulfilled the promises of redemption to Israel. The problem which arose was that the Gospel had to be preached in terms intelligible not only to the Jews, but also to the Hellenistic audiences and in harmony with their world outlook. Bultmann has noted that

By and large, the chief difference between Hellenistic Christianity and the original Palestinian version was that the former ceased to be dominated by the eschatological expectation and the philosophy of life which that implied. Instead, there was developed a new pattern of piety centered in the cultus. The Hellenistic Christians, it is true, continued to expect an imminent end of the world, the coming of the Judge and Saviour from heaven and the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment. But there were also Christians who became sceptical of

¹Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: World, 1956), pp. 175-208.

the primitive Jewish Christian eschatology and rejected it. . . . Above all, the Gentile Christians found the idea of a redemptive history foreign to them, and as a result they lost the sense of belonging to the community of the last days.²

Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, though himself very much a Jew, faced the hermeneutical task of making the grace of God real, understandable, and confrontational. What Victor Paul Furnish has correctly observed with regard to Paul's exhortations, *i.e.*, that he is not concerned with being original, but rather with being concrete, relevant, inclusive, and persuasive,³ may be justifiably extended to his use of other traditional material, both within and without Judaism and Jewish Christianity; in other words, when the need is present, he has no hesitation about the use of Hellenistic and Gnostic conceptions to communicate the truth of his Gospel.

Redemption. One important example of this, relevant for our discussion here, is Paul's use of the Gnostic Redeemer myth. Whereas both primitive Christianity and Gnosticism agree that man is incapable of redeeming himself from the world and the powers dominant in it, man's redemption must come from the divine intervention as an event in history. For the original Palestinian church, Jesus is the "Man" exalted by God, whose impending coming will mark the end of the redemption-history of God's chosen people. Since this concept was incomprehensible to the Hellenistic mind, several alternant ways of

²*Ibid.*, p. 176.

³Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 68-81.

speaking of this salvation-event within history developed. Bultmann is again correct in his judgment, that

The most important development . . . was the interpretation of the person of Jesus in terms of the Gnostic redemption myth. He is a divine figure sent down from the celestial world of light, the Son of the Most High coming forth from the Father, veiled in earthly form and inaugurating the redemption through his work.⁴

That the use of the Redeemer myth had already found its way into the churches by the time of Paul can be seen in the pre-Pauline Christological hymn quoted from his tradition in Phil. 2:6-11. We can see that when Paul speaks of the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, the dominant interpretation of the death and Resurrection of Jesus is adapted from the Gnostic conception of it as a cosmic event, as Bultmann notes,

through which the 'old things' have been done away and the 'new' inaugurated (II Cor. 5:17). For Paul, Christ has lost his identity as an individual human person. He knows him no longer 'after the flesh' (II Cor. 5:16). Instead, Jesus has become a cosmic figure, a body to which all belong who have been joined to him through faith and baptism (I Cor. 12:12f.; Gal. 3:27f.). For it is 'into him' that men are baptized (Gal. 3:27), and 'in Christ' that the Christian lives henceforth. The Pauline 'in Christ' is often wrongly interpreted in a mystical sense, whereas it is a Gnostic cosmic conception. It may also be called an *ecclesiological* formula, since the 'body' of Christ is the Church, or an *eschatological* formula, since with the establishment of the body of Christ the eschatological event has been inaugurated.⁵

Paul and the Christian Church took over the Gnostic redemption myth terminology because it was one in which the salvation-event of the person and work of Jesus could be made intelligible as a present reality.

⁴Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 196; *cf.* also p. 164.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 197.

Instructive for our study, furthermore, are the changes Paul makes in his adaptation of the Redeemer myth for his Gospel:

Proclamation. We know from the investigations of comparative religions the basic fact that both Christianity and Gnosticism affirm the presence of the spiritual world in this world; the distinction of "How?" is decisive.⁶

The Redeemer is present in the heavenly message, the word of preaching. Paul believed that when God inaugurated the redemption event in Christ, he simultaneously established the word of preaching and the ministry of reconciliation.⁷ In II Cor. 5:17ff. and 6:2, Paul informs us that the eschatological redemption becomes a present reality. Although the word is an alert, a "summons to repentance and a challenge to decision" in both systems, in Gnosticism this call constitutes "a summons to become conscious of one's alienation from the world and to detach oneself from it."⁸ On the other hand, as Bultmann summarizes,

Primitive Christian preaching had no use for cosmological instruction or for the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. And although it presents the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus in mythological terms, the preaching of the Cross is nevertheless a decisive summons to repentance. This is because the redemptive significance of the Cross (and therefore of the Resurrection also) can only become apparent to those who submit to being crucified with Christ, who accept him as Lord in

⁶For a survey of Gnostic belief in this regard, cf. the Appendix.

⁷Cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁸*Ibid.*

their daily lives. Adherence to the gospel message is called 'faith,' and faith involves a new existential understanding of self. In it man realizes his creatureliness and guilt. It is an act of obedience, in which man surrenders all his 'boasting,' all desire to live on his own resources, all adherence to tangible realities, and assents to the scandalous fact of a crucified Lord.⁹ Thus he is freed from the world by being freed from himself.

So it is through the recognition of the challenge to accept this salvation-occurrence as the deed of grace that man is thrust into genuine decision: the Christian is then saved through his faith, while the Gnostic is saved by nature; the Christian is freed for his authentic, on-going self, while for the Gnostic, the true self, that divine spark, is freed from the fleshly body. The point is that in the one case, the word confronts man with the need to decide whether to accept the positive, the grace of God; in the other, the man is confronted to decide for separation from everything of this world and the learning of Gnostic cosmological instructions, the outcome of which was pre-determined fate. Moreover, in the one case human existence is shown to be an historical existence, the individual retaining responsibility for his decisions, which he has freely made; in the other, human existence is entirely dependent upon fate and must be understood in terms of natural being.¹⁰

Membership in the body: fate or faith? We have mentioned above the similarities between the body of the Redeemer in the Gnostic myth

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 201f.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 202f. Also Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 292-306.

and the body of Christ, particularly how they both make use of cosmological categories. The essential distinction lies in the individual who becomes a part of the body in the redemption event. For the Gnostic, it is the pre-existent spark within the fleshly man, the spark which was originally a part of the body, which on account of fate is re-incorporated into the body of the Redeemer. For the Christian, however, it is the man who had his beginning in history and who, through historical decision through faith, determined his incorporation into the body of Christ.

The spirit. The influence of the Gnostic view of the spirit was the cause of several of Paul's subjects of exhortation--*e.g.*, against placing a disproportionate value on the speaking in tongues, or against pride in the gifts of the Spirit. In Gnostic thought, the revealer came and awakened the spark of light abiding in the inward man--the spirit. The result of this awakening was an outward sign of spiritual power, frequently some miraculous phenomenon. Paul finds just the opposite in the working of the Spirit: rather than being some uncommon phenomenon that might be the source for pride, the Spirit works in and through Christian moral behavior, in everyday acts of love and victory over everyday temptations. The Spirit is not merely a magical force working miracles in the hearts of believers; more importantly, he is the norm of practical behavior. It is thus that Paul can speak in terms of "walking in (or according to) the Spirit"

¹¹Cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the N. T.*, I, 330-340.

rather than "according to the flesh" or "according to men" (cf. Rom. 8:4, I Cor. 3:3). The Spirit confronts man, not with the once-and-for-all opportunity to decide for faith and thus, for salvation; rather man is given the freedom and then confronted with an ongoing succession of opportunities for deciding for faith or against it.¹¹ The result of an ongoing decision for faith is the life of love. And it is only by the Spirit dwelling within the members that they are united, and not by any outwardly discernible or provable signs--as Bultmann observes,

Those who are united in the Church are not bound together by any worldly interests or motives. They are not joined by a common nationality, or even by an Idea, but by the Spirit which dwells in each of them. And just because of this, just because the Church depends for its existence, not on worldly motives or resources, but on the power available through the grace of God, Paul can describe it as that cosmic entity, the 'body of Christ.'¹²

Conclusion. So we may conclude that for Paul, salvation is the eschatological occurrence which brings to an end the old age through the ongoing Christ-event. This salvation-occurrence is present in the proclamation of the word, the celebration of baptism and the Eucharist, and the *agape* relationships existing among Christians--i.e., this salvation-occurrence has its home in the body of Christ, in the Church. For this reason we may safely conclude that the σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ concept is the central Pauline soteriological concept, and, as such, worthy of our continuing study and interpretation.

¹²Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, pp. 205f.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL ORDER

Paul was very much the product of his age; and it was precisely because he stood within the cosmological understanding of his day and spoke to his contemporary problems from that stance that he was and is so relevant for a discussion of Christian social order.

Before one can draw conclusions from Paul concerning how he spoke to the needs of his day, and what implications from this might apply to ours, one must be aware of an important feature of Paul's anthropology--his eschatological perspective. Paul understands a distinction between the present age and that which is to come. The present age is being held captive by hostile powers opposed to God and to His purposes, and is characterized by its transitoriness, suffering, perversity, and immorality. God alone will be able to destroy completely these hostile forces, but this is yet to come; God's power is presently at work and ultimately will subdue the present powers (Phil. 2:5-11). Paul refers to this final victory of God as *salvation*, and understands the death and resurrection of Christ as the decisive salvation event in which God's power is operative. So it is in Christ that God's age first begins to break in on the present age. It is Paul's belief that the present age is therefore very close to its end, and that God's age will break in at any moment. We shall see below that this eschatological perspective influences Paul's preaching and exhortation concerning the extent of the area or realm in which he believes the Christian should be concerned about changes

in social order.

We have seen that for Paul, incorporation into Christ's death and Resurrection--the life "in Christ," or "in the Spirit"--does not occur except in community with other Christians. While it is true that it is the individual who is confronted with God's word, and who is ultimately responsible for his action and response, it is likewise true that he stands within the people of God, and it is within the context of other creatures of God that his salvation must be worked out. Therefore Paul is most concerned that all Christians co-operate within the Christian community, the body of Christ, so that by precept and example each individual member might be influenced by other members to make the proper response to God's gift and confrontation, the very Lordship of Christ.

Faith as response to grace. The response of the individual who identifies with the saving activity of God in Christ, and in doing so becomes a part of the body of Christ, can only be faith. The proper response to the free, undeserved, non-repayable, ἀγάπη of God is πίστις ("faith," "belief"). The content of that faith is for Paul best expressed in the kerygmatic formula "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11; Rom. 1:4; 5:1, 11, 21; 7:25; I Cor. 1:7, 8, 9, 10; 8:6; and many others). But we must be quick to add that more than "lip service" to this formula is meant by Paul; for recognition of the Lordship of Christ is at the same time recognition of one's own creatureliness and subservience. This gift of God's love in Christ calls for more than an affirmation of the lips, then; it calls for a response of the

total being--it calls for obedience.

Faith as obedience. Since faith as the acknowledgment that Christ is Lord *is* acknowledgment that one is within the sphere of his Lordship, it is *per se* an act of commitment to him, and the beginning of obedience to him. As Furnish has said,

This is why the apostle can speak of 'faith's obedience' (Rom. 1:5), why the unbelieving Jews can be described as not having 'submitted' (obediently) to God's righteousness (Rom. 10:3), and why the idea of 'obeying' the gospel can stand parallel with that of 'believing' the preached word (Rom. 10:16-17).¹³

By "obedience" Paul means much more than the simple adherence to a set of precepts or laws; he means a radical, total, and unconditional "belonging to" Christ, in the sense that Christ is to be in total command of his life (*cf.* II Cor. 13:5, Gal. 2:20). The man in faith must surrender his former understanding of himself. He could not in Paul's day, nor can he today, use God's "Law" as a means to establish his own righteousness, as the Jews of Paul's day were boastful of doing. Neither in Paul's day, nor today, can the Christian have the security or pride of knowing that he is the master of his fate, that he is measuring up to a pre-set standard for acceptability. Moreover, neither in Paul's day nor ours does the Christian have anything of which to boast; for the object of one's boasting or pride must be

¹³Furnish, *op. cit.*, p. 185. *Cf.* Rudolf Bultmann, "Πιστεύω," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1959), VI, 174-230; and his *Theology of the New Testament*, I, 300ff., 314ff., 330ff.

one's own accomplishment, the asserting of one's own will through the accomplishment of deeds.¹⁴ Participation in the crucified Christ, as well as participation in the Christian community of believers, is the gift of God's Spirit, and as such has nothing to do with an accomplishment of man. All man can do is to respond, and that response is either obedience or disobedience to God's will.

The implications of this for both Paul's day and ours must be obvious. Not only is it clear that simple verbal affirmation of God's gift and the Lordship of Christ, without accompanying responsive activity in accord with God's will, must be counted as disobedience in the full sense of that term; it is also plain that any merit in the Christian's response to God's gift belongs to God and not to the individual. The lessons for today's Christian can be easily perceived, and should include at least the following: (1) The appropriate response to God's gift embraces much more than occasional, or even regular, attendance at Sunday morning worship services; it must include total involvement of all of one's time, talents, and abilities, in all of one's activities. (2) Since the demand for this total obedience to Christ is a part of faith, the Christian misunderstands the whole concept of the Lordship of Christ if he takes pride in, or boasts about, his accomplishments and involvements in the work and activity of the Lord.

¹⁴Cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the N. T.*, I, 314ff.

Paul speaks metaphorically of *slavery* with regard to this obedience in Rom. 6:12ff. because this terminology best expressed to the people of his day the scope of obedience which God claims from Christians. For today, perhaps the more appropriate terminology should be in terms of attitude or total life outlook; so perhaps Paul's construction around and including the pre-Pauline hymn in the second chapter of Philippians is more immediately comprehensible:

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this *mind* among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and *became obedient* unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for *God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*¹⁵

Furnish recognizes two final points which must be noted with regard to this obedience:

First, the Christian's obedience is inseparable from the event of God's grace which makes it possible. God's grace constitutes not just the summons to obedience but the possibility of obedience. . . . The believer who has been baptized into Christ's death and has therefore died to his own past does not stand in some shadowy limbo waiting for the resurrection life. He now stands 'in' and 'under' grace (Rom. 5:2, 6:14) which gives his hope a special character. . . . In the second place, it is clear . . . that Paul does not equate obedience with the perform-

¹⁵Phil. 2:3-13 (R.S.V.). Italics mine.

ance of 'righteous deeds' moralistically or legally conceived. . . . Righteousness is not the goal of obedience but its pre-supposition.¹⁶

So in the familiar terminology of Bultmann, the member of the body of Christ, in his old life-style and soteriological expectations, stands in the "no longer," while with regard to resurrection and its final reward he stands in the "not yet." He stands in a new life of obedience to a Lord who both gives all and demands all. It is to the obedience to this Lord that the Christian is called. An interesting point of speculation which suggests itself at this point (but which calls for extensive research and cannot be dealt with in the context of the present study) concerns Paul's understanding of the place of the Christian in history. We have seen that the Pauline eschatology is more than one motif among many, but is essential to his perspective from which all else is viewed. It is clear that the Christian stands between the "no longer" and the "not yet," but it is not immediately clear whether Paul sees this as a point along a continuum running from the old age to the new age, or whether the Christian in some way sits at that non-linear point at which the new age is breaking in on the old. (Paul's disregard for changing the inadequacies of the social order of his day would tend to suggest the latter, although the immediacy with which he expected this to occur would influence greatly this omission in his teaching. We have seen, however, that he does call for a new attitude toward some of these problems within the

¹⁶Furnish, *op. cit.*, pp. 195ff.

church community, particularly with regard to the equality of men and women, slaves and freemen, Greeks and Jews; and in what follows we shall suggest that we work towards the extension of Paul's attitudes into our age, outside the community of Christians as well, in keeping with our changed understanding of the temporal imminence of the Parousia.)

Obedience in love. We have seen that life in Christ is both life in the Spirit (Rom. 8) and the life in the Christian community composed of others who are in the Spirit (Rom. 14:15, I Cor. 8:11, II Cor. 13:13, Phil. 2:2). It is important to Paul that, when the Christian is uncertain as to what the obedient action in a particular instance might be, that he is living in this communal context. This is true not only because of the support the Christian would actually gain from the community of believers in terms of correction of individual errors of perception, or in the motivation from the community to expedite the appropriate action. It is even more important as a reference point for these decisions. There are implicit in Paul's discussions of obedience two closely-related guidelines: The Christian can be guided in his action by doing (1) that which expresses love toward, and does good for, the brother, and (2) that which builds up the body of Christ, the community of the brethren.

The application of these guidelines is easy to document in Paul, and the implications for our day become quite clear. The assumption is made, for example, that commending Onesimus as a "brother"

will make explicitly apparent to Philemon what should be his correct attitude and course of action (Phlm. 16). That Paul did not advocate the immediate freeing of all slaves need not concern us, for his expectation of the eschaton in the immediate future made such an endeavor inappropriate. On the other hand, we must be quick to recognize that, given our present understanding of the coming of the Parousia, actions to overcome slavery and its resultant attitudes *are* very much appropriate for the activity of the body of Christ today; and Paul has given us in this practical course of action proposed for Philemon the background from which we might derive principles and guidelines for a Christian approach to this and other social problems of our day.

Paul also applies these principles to the marriage relationship within the Christian community. Against the prevailing social order of his day and its incumbent expectations that the man is on a higher plane than the woman and is justified in "using" her according to his desires and disregarding hers, Paul calls for equal conjugal rights and mutual consideration within the Christian marriage relationship.

Paul frequently calls for actions to be decided upon the basis of how they might affect the brother (*e.g.*, Rom. 14:13ff., I Cor. 8:9ff.) or whether they build up the community (*e.g.*, I Cor. 10:23ff., 12:7; II Cor. 12:19, 13:10; I Thess. 5:11). How important this factor is for Paul is shown especially in Rom. 14:19-15:3, where mutual upbuilding and the good of the brother are paramount; and in I Cor. 14:26, where "all things" are to be done for "edification." Moreover, in those

places where Paul speaks in terms of that portion of the law which is still valid for the Christian, he says that the law is "fulfilled" in terms of the love of the neighbor (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:13f.). And I Cor. 13 can leave little doubt as to the importance of love, the attitude which accompanies it, and the extent to which the Christian is to carry its expression.

Application. We can conclude that Paul preached the love of the neighbor as the appropriate response to God's gift in Christ, and that the building up of the body of Christ, the community of Christians, was a by-product of that loving activity. Just as Paul was relevant to the world of early Christianity because of the way he made explicit and immediately applicable his belief that the Lordship of Christ is both gift and demand (the intersection of his anthropology and his theology), so also we, in order to be relevant to our world, must be decisive in applying our faith, and its accompanying demands for love, to our situation.

It lies outside the scope of this study to investigate all that this implies. We can only state our conviction that present-day participation in the body of Christ must include the love of the brother--both the Christian brother and the brother outside of Christ--and the building up of the Christian community; whatever social changes occur as a result of that activity contribute not only to the humanization of man's existence today, but also participate in the salvation process. The continuation of faith as obedience expressed in loving concern for the brother is not only our opportunity; it is still our

obligation. And this is the most immediately applicable lesson to be learned from this present study of the body of Christ in the thought of Paul.

APPENDIX

THE Gnostic REDEEMER MYTH

The essential element which Gnosticism brought to the Hellenistic culture was a new understanding of man and his relationship to the world, in which the world was no longer 'home' for man, but was rather the soil of his captivity. Man's real self belonged to the divine world of light; he was only a captive of the demonic powers of darkness in this world. Basically, then, we may say that Gnosticism is a redemptive religion based on dualism.

The Gnostic Redeemer myth grew out of an attempt of the various Gnostic religious sects to give expression to this new conception of the cosmos. Although the basic elements of the myth are developed at great length by these different sects, it is only the basic elements which are of interest for our study here. One could hardly improve on the summary statement given by Bultmann, which I will relate at this point:

The Gnostic myth recounts--with manifold variations--the fate of the soul. It tells of its origin in the world of light, of its tragic fall and its life as an alien on earth, its imprisonment in the body, its deliverance and final ascent and return to the world of light. The soul--or, more accurately in the language of Gnosticism itself, man's true, inner self, is a part, splinter, or spark of a heavenly figure of light, the original man. Before all time this figure was conquered by the demonic powers of darkness, though how that came to pass is a point on which the various mythologies differ. These powers tore the figure of light into shreds and divided it up, and the elements of light thus produced were used by the demons as cohesive magnetic powers which were needed in order to create a world out of the chaos of darkness as a counterpart of the world of light, of which they were jealous. If these elements of light were removed, this artificial world of ours, the cosmos, would return to its primordial state of chaos. Therefore the demons jealously watch over the sparks of light which they stole. Naturally, interest is concentrated on these sparks of light, which are inclosed in man and represent

his innermost self. The demons endeavour to stupefy them and make them drunk, sending them to sleep and making them forget their heavenly home. Sometimes their attempt succeeds, but in other cases the consciousness of their heavenly origin remains awake. They know they are in an alien world, and that this world is their prison, and hence their yearning for deliverance. The supreme deity takes pity on the imprisoned sparks of light, and sends down the heavenly figure of light, his son, to redeem them. This Son arrays himself in the garment of the earthly body, lest the demons should recognize him. He invites his own to join him, awakens them from their sleep, reminds them of their heavenly home, and teaches them about the way to return. His chief task is to pass on the sacred passwords which are needed on the journey back. For the souls must pass the different spheres of the planets, the watch-posts of the demonic cosmic powers. The Gnostic redeemer delivers discourses in which he reveals himself as God's emissary: 'I am the shepherd,' 'I am the truth,' and so forth. After accomplishing his work, he ascends and returns to heaven again to prepare a way for his own to follow him. This they will do when they die and the spark of light is severed from the prison of the body. His work is to assemble all the sparks of light. That is the work he has inaugurated, and it will be completed when all the sparks of light have been set free and have ascended to heaven to rejoin the one body of the figure of light who in primordial times fell, was imprisoned and torn to shreds. When the process is complete, this world will come to an end and return to its original chaos. The darkness is left to itself, and that is the judgment.¹

So as we have noted in Chapter VI, redemption comes from the heavenly world; the highest god sends his son and "image" to bring *Gnosis*, that knowledge upon which salvation depends. Salvation is bestowed upon the Gnostic who has come to know of his heavenly origin, of his earthly captivity, and of the way of redemption. Thus it was the function of the Gnostic myth to depict the cosmic drama which underlies the soteriology of Gnosticism.

¹Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: World, 1956), pp. 163f. For a more complete survey, see pp. 162-171; also Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 164-183.

In conclusion I might point to some contrasts between Paul's view of the body of Christ and the Gnostic understanding of the Primal Man:

(1) The first major distinction which must be pointed out is that for the Gnostic, the fellowship of the pneumatics is based on a common detachment from the world, so all earthly ties are disregarded. For Christians, on the other hand, it is precisely the fellowship of the earthly believers which constitutes the body of Christ; Paul nowhere speaks of the souls of departed Christians as members of the body of Christ,² but only of those Christians in this world. The result is that for Paul, Christian fellowship is essential for membership in the body of Christ, while for the Gnostic, only possession of the "knowledge" of one's own individual salvation is essential for becoming a part of the restored Primal Man.

(2) A second distinction is that in Gnosticism, the Primal Man is more cosmological; the world and all of humanity are included in his body. For Paul, it is not primarily the world, but the Church which forms the body.

(3) In Gnosticism, the Savior himself gathers the sparks of light together to build his own body, while in Pauline Christianity, it is the task of Christians to build up the body of Christ, the body of the Church.

²I understand the reference to "those who have fallen asleep in Christ" (I Cor. 15:18) to mean "those who were in Christ when they fell asleep."

(4) Anthropologically, there is a major distinction concerning how the fleshly body is to be evaluated and, closely related to that, how this present cosmos is to be evaluated. In Gnosticism, the universe and the fleshly body are seen as inherently evil, a prison for the divine spark from the Primal Man; in Christianity, on the other hand, both the present universe and the physical body are creations of God and, as such, are not evil in themselves, but rather have fallen under the influence of evil forces, and there is no pre-existent spark of heavenly light captured in man.

(5) It must be said that there is a major contrast in the understanding of the humanity and divinity of the redeemer: Christianity affirms the real and actual humanity of Jesus, while Gnosticism holds the view that the appearance of humanity is, for the pre-existent heavenly redeemer, only a disguise.

(6) Finally, probably the most far-reaching distinction to be made concerns the unity of the body; for in the view of Paul the body is a complete unity into which Christians are incorporated, while the Gnostic view is that the unity of the Primal Man is dependent upon the collection of the divine sparks which were originally a part of his body.

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